

THE UNION LAUNCHES BIG DRIVE

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL of the Union meeting on March 30-31 put into operation plans for a drive for union membership which will put the S.T.F.U. over the top in 1940. The drive was launched in response to dozens of requests from new communities asking for organizers to be on hand to set up new locals. The plans call for intensive action in Arkansas, Missouri, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Tennessee. Every member is expected to do his part in arranging meetings for organizers, for speakers and for action on all fronts. See inside pages on organization for further details.

50,000 DUES PAYING MEMBERS BEFORE CHRISTMAS 1940

GREETINGS!

With this issue we begin the STFU News for 1940. We want to have every issue ready on the first of each month. In order to do this we ask everyone to cooperate by sending in news of meetings, new locals, and interesting facts about the Union. Let us know of new officers elected, picnics, and important meetings, as well as marriages, deaths, and new babies. Get your news in before the first of the month.

STFU DELEGATES ATTEND CONFERENCE AT CHATTANOOGA

Nine STFU delegates from Arkansas, Missouri, Mississippi and Tennessee attended Second Southern Conference for Human Welfare at Chattanooga, April 14, 15, and 16th. They were:-Butler, Betton, Treadway, Beck, Parks, G. Smith, Griffin, Mitchell and Evelyn Smith. There were 900 or perhaps 1,000 delegates at the Conference from all over the South and visitors from the North, East and West. They represented organizations from all over the South working for liberal

causes. Our delegates took advantage of every opportunity to tell of the work of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union in getting better living and working conditions for the tenant farmers, sharecroppers, day laborers and migratory farm workers. Many of the delegates represented new unions which have organized in the South recently. There were many good speeches made at the Conference and many important actions were taken of which the most important was the launching of the drive against the poll tax.

UNION DEMANDS 25c HOUR WAGE

IN ACCORDANCE WITH the resolution, passed by the 6th Annual Convention at Blytheville, Arkansas in January, asking Congress to amend the AAA so as to require all landlords planting more than 25 acres to cash crops to pay a minimum of 25¢ per hour to all hired help, early in March three representatives of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union attended hearings of the Senate Sub-Committee on AAA Amendments in Washington and spoke before the Committee. These three were: D. A. Griffin, state organizer of Arkansas, F. R. Betton, vice-president of the STFU, and J. R. Butler, president.

THESE REPRESENTATIVES argued that, since agricultural workers do not come under the Wages and Hours Law and since acreage reduction, plus increased use of improved farm machinery, has reduced many thousands of sharecroppers and tenants to the day labor class, making it possible for planters to draw all the benefits, it was therefore the duty of the AAA to take steps which would enable these farmers who now do only seasonal work to live decently.

THE UNION SPOKESMEN also asked that not more than \$5,000 be paid to any landholder in any one year-- this to permit a larger distribution to tenants and sharecroppers yet remaining on the land; that the rules governing AAA community and county committee elections be changed so as to require notice of the time and place of such elections to be given far enough in advance as to enable all to know about them and take part; and, further, that all government checks due tenants and sharecroppers be mailed to them direct.

BUILD THE UNION—PAY YOUR DUES!!

— ORGANIZATION NEWS —

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

J. R. BUTLER

THE UNION IS NOW GROWING AS NEVER BEFORE with the new organizing setup put into effect recently. According to this new plan the Union has now three State Organizers, and later there will probably be one more. Each man is assigned to a separate state and he is responsible for all organizing in his state. Of course, there are still the County Organizers who are selected by the County Council, and also the fee basis organizers who are connected with the locals. These sub-organizers work under the direction of the State Organizer in his particular state. The state organizers at present are:

Missouri - W. M. Tanner
Arkansas - D. A. Griffin

Mississippi - George H. Smith
Oklahoma - Guy Thomas

These organizers are employed by the Executive Council on a three-months trial basis---that is they have three months in which to make good, to put their states on a self-supporting basis.

GET IN TOUCH WITH THEM FOR ALL ORGANIZING MATTERS IN YOUR STATE. They will be glad to visit your local if you want to have them.

NEW LOCALS ORGANIZED SINCE THE CONVENTION

Mississippi

Rattlesnake, No. 50, Stringtown
25 members
Coon Creek, No. 71, Macon
15 members
Shuqualak, No. 17, Shuqualak
20 members
Swift Going, No. 14, Shaw
20 members
Stringtown, No. 69, Stringtown
20 members
Silver Mount, No. 42, Cleveland
15 members

Arkansas

New Home, No. 40, Roundpond
10 members
Fair Oaks, No. 44, Fair Oaks
10 members
Morning View, No. 7, McCrory
15 members
Missco, No. 86, Keiser
80 members
St. Francis Colony, No. 27, Widener
15 members
Howell, No. 1, Howell
7 members
Oak Grove, No. 60, McClelland
25 members
Dyess, No. 29, Dyess
220 members

Missouri

Kennett, No. 79, Kennett
15 members
Denton, No. 57, Steele
20 members
Midway, No. 11, Bragg City
30 members

STFU STARTS MIGRATORY ORGANISATION+++

A committee of the Executive Council, composed of H. L. Mitchell, Howard Kester, and D. A. Griffin, was elected at the first regular meeting this year to make plans to organize migratory workers. Migratory workers are people who move about from one place to another, harvesting one crop here and another there. They pick cotton in the South, strawberries in Louisiana, Alabama, etc, harvest vegetables in various areas, and pick fruit in other places.

The S.T.F.U. is interested in these workers because most of them are farmers who are the victims of machine farming and the AAA program, and also, because they chop and pick cotton in our areas.

While the workers who have shifted around and are on the road have attracted a lot of publicity and attention, the STFU has always pointed out that for every person on the roads today there are 10 persons left stranded in the little towns in our area, who did not have the money to buy an old car to move about in. We are also interested in them. Thousands of our best members who have been driven off the land by the AAA and new farm machinery are working at day labor. But we cannot neglect organizing the people who do have to roam the roads for work.

While the strawberry picking season is on in Arkansas around Bald Knob, the S.T.F.U. has had Mrs. Flotine Hodge working in that area. She has also been directed and assisted in her work by D. A. Griffin, State Organizer of Arkansas.

Migratory workers are asked to join a special migratory local. A different application blank is furnished from the regular one. These members will be considered as members at large.

~ ~ ~ NEWS AND NOTES ~ ~ ~

BY BLAINE TREADWAY, SECRETARY

Evelyn Smith, who has worked for the STFU for several years, has been away since the end of January on a leave of absence. She has been studying at the University of Mississippi since then as a special student. From all reports she has been enjoying the chance to go back to school for a few months. Evelyn was able to be back at the Executive Council meeting March 30th, and was also with the delegation to Chattanooga at the Southern Conference on Human Welfare. On June 7th Evelyn is to take up new duties for the Union as Educational Director. Plans are being made for a great deal of educational work this summer.

New Literature of the Union

A new pamphlet recently has been published by the Union giving all the latest information regarding the program, platform, and policies of the Union. It is available to all organizers and to all the local unions. Its title is: STFU--1940.

Other publications of the Union, such as "History of the STFU," "Aims and Objectives," "Report on Mexico," and "The Government Farm Program," as well as officers reports to the Convention, are also available. Every local should have a supply of literature on hand. A price list will be furnished anyone who writes for it. ORDER LITERATURE NOW FOR YOUR LOCAL AND FOR YOUR FRIENDS.

The only legal cases of Union members now pending are the cases involving Beatrice, Henry, and Dan Johnson. All the rest have been won or dismissed.

The new office secretary, Mrs. Cleo Butler, is the niece by marriage of President J. R. Butler. She is a native of White County, Arkansas and is doing a very good job as office secretary.

Blaine Treadway, Secretary of STFU, visited the County Council meeting at Morton in Woodruff County May 4th. He was also in Missouri with W. M. Tanner, speaking at several local meetings, May 11th and 12th.

President J. R. Butler and D. A. Griffin attended a Conference on New Uses for Cotton at Little Rock April 2nd. They were there to get information for the Union on the free mattress distribution plan which the government is launching. Butler, speaking at the Conference, said: "The STFU feels that the only way to sell more cotton is for employers to pay decent wages, especially to cotton workers who produce it, and then there will be no surplus." Information learned about the free mattresses was not very satisfactory. When the Union has full information we will inform all the members as to just what to do.

The old car driven by W. M. Tanner was found to be unserviceable and was disposed of last month. A better car has been purchased for him.

All secretaries should make it a special point to read all communications at the closed regular meetings-- especially letters from the National Office, along with financial reports. In this way interest can be created and we can have an informed membership as to what is going on in the Union. Study the financial reports, and write to the office if there is any question you wish answered.

A new type of report blank was sent out for April reports from the local secretaries on membership and finances. The old reports created a lot of confusion. But many of the secretaries got mixed up with the new reports. In a few days, when the reports are mailed out for May, the National Secretary will send along with them a letter of complete instruction on how to fill it out. This is very important, and

NEWS AND NOTES
(Continued)

all good secretaries will do their best to get their reports filled out accurately and into the National Office before the 10th of the month. WATCH FOR THE NEW REPORTS AND GET THEM IN ON TIME AND FILLED OUT CORRECTLY.

President J. R. Butler and George Smith, state organizer for Mississippi, recently attended a meeting on Highway 64 in Tennessee, near Memphis, where plans are under way for organizing a new local of over 100 members. Progress is being made. Watch Tennessee!

Plans are going forward to start organizing migratory workers in Arkansas. D. A. Griffin and Mrs. Flotine Hodge have been working in the strawberry section and you may expect to see several groups organized soon. J. R. Butler visited the area on May 9th and 10th to assist Brother Griffin.

Mrs. Hodge was elected, at the recent Woodruff County Council meeting, STFU NEWS reporter from Woodruff County.

SCHOOL FACILITIES INADEQUATE

(Editorial Note: To reprint herewith word for word and without comment the following dispatch to the S.T.F.U. National Office from an S.T.F.U. member, Edmondson, Arkansas)

"Just a few existing practices we find to be a lamentable condition in our school here at Edmondson, Ark.

"1st. A lack of teachers; the number having been cut for no plausible reason from 5 to 4 with more than 250 children to care for, including the 8th grade.

"2nd. The patrons of our school have to furnish wood, which is indeed a matter of hardship and even sufferage by the children in mid-winter. So much so that the board did send 3 tons of coal to us this severe last winter.

"3rd. Salaries paid. The teachers you might say are teaching at a compulsory sacrifice, the salaries having been cut from \$75.00 to \$35.00 for the principal and from \$40.00 to \$25.00 for the lower grade teachers.

"4th. It is regretted to be said that we have only a six-month term, divided in proportion of six weeks for the summer term to 4 and one-half for the winter term. Our school closed in March-- leaving the poor little children to make the best or the worst of it educationally."

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

J. R. Butler. Born April 15, 1893, near what is now the town of Pangborn, in White County, Arkansas, in the foothills of the Ozark Mountains in a small log cabin with a lean-to. He was son of a tenant farmer who refused to remain a tenant. In those days there was plenty of cheap uncleared wild land.

Attended country school three to five months each year. When fifteen years old he attended one year of country high (?) school, took teachers' examination. Began teaching in the summer of 1909 and continued more or less regularly until 1925.

Was drafted for service in the World War and served in England, France, and Belgium.

Began work in Oklahoma oil fields early in 1926; continued until 1932. Ran a saw mill until 1934. This was a line of work that had served as a filler between teaching and farming throughout life.

He helped to found the Southern Tenant Farmers Union in 1934 and is still working at it.

SKETCHES OF OTHER STFU MEMBERS ARE TO FOLLOW IN SUCCEEDING ISSUES.

ECHOES FROM THE LOCALS

It's the ambition of Local 38, Cotton Plant, Arkansas, says Secretary Ernest Jones, to be the number one local in Woodruff County this year; and from the fine meetings he reports we gather that No. 38 will at least be up there and pitching at the year's end. Brother F. R. Betton, vice-president of the Union, was with the local for its April 21st meeting.

From Beulah, Mississippi, Secretary Curley Williams reports that the Rock of Ages Local there met recently and got on its feet again in spite of a scarcity of money. There is no work going on at Beulah, he writes us, except farm work, and it is being done by day labor.

Hildreth Local, No. 68, Portageville, Missouri, is changing its meeting place from the home of Acting Secretary Lewis D. Hoxworth to Clover Hill. Brother Hoxworth says that this is because he did not have enough room at his house, which seems to us good evidence of a growing membership. Keep it up, No. 68! According to Secretary Hoxworth, the local's sorest need at present is speakers who can bring the message of unity to that community.

Local 9, Dixie, Arkansas, has had trouble lately not with planters but with flood waters. It was White River that rose and kept members from holding an important meeting April 22nd, which was to be devoted to plans for the future. Notwithstanding, Secretary Slater reports his membership carrying on with all determination toward a new day for the disinherited.

Sunday, May 5th, saw Local 16, Leland, Miss., hold its installation ceremony, at which Rev. Morgan, member of Local 5, Boyle, Miss., presided. Greetings to the new officers!

The Woodruff County Council met May 4th with the Morton local, No. 10. In addition to regular business, delegates heard Brother Blaine Treadway, National Secretary, Memphis, speak. Brother J. F. Hynds, chairman National Grievance Committee, Forrest City, Ark., was also present-- as was D. A. Griffin, Arkansas state organizer.

Members of St. Francis Colony local, Widener, Ark., pass these fine spring days toiling on the farm for seventy-five cents per day, but found time to meet on the regular date and discuss their common problems among themselves.

Local 5, Boyle, Miss., writes in that the push of work cut down attendance somewhat at its last meeting, but that the struggle among the faithful few to build a strong union goes on unabated. And for that determination our hats are off to you! What we need are more members and more locals with that same grit.

Oak Grove local, No. 13, Widener, Ark., reports that its best meeting in a long time was held April 25th. As outcome of the meeting, several new applications were promised for the near future. And it is time to join together when wages fall to seventy-five cents per day, as they have fallen in St. Francis County.

Members of Shady Grove local, No. 6, Forrest City, Ark., are having serious trouble with local landlords, who allegedly are trying to force them to join the Farm Bureau. But these members are remaining loyal to their own organization, the STFU, and report that they are on the forward march and mean to continue despite all obstacles and lures to lead them astray. Local 6 also wishes to announce that a mass meeting will be held by its members June 16th.

As the result of the recent trip made by President Butler and Vice-President Betton into Oklahoma, Brother Guy Thomas reports that Liberty local, Braggs, Okla., has been revived, 8 old members paying up their dues and 2 new ones coming in. Guy, who is former state organizer for Oklahoma, writes in that much interest was stirred up by President Butler's speech, that people everywhere are talking about the Union, and that the future in Oklahoma holds great possibilities for organization. Brother Thomas states further that he is ready and eager to go to work to that end.

Delegates from the Southern Tenant Farmers Union will attend three conventions of friendly organizations in New York City soon-- the Lawyers Guild Convention, the Workers Defense League Convention and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union Convention.

CONSIDER THE BANANA, EVERY TIME IT LEAVES THE BUNCH IT GETS SKINNED
STICK TO YOUR UNION

SMALL POTATOES

Brother Joe Smith, Dixie, Arkansas, is the proud father of a brand-new STFU member. It's a boy. Congratulations!

Dear Brother Moses McNeal and Wife, Leland, Mississippi: Congratulations on the big 10-lb. boy born to you recently. Sharpen a hoe for him, Brother McNeal-- M.L. will be needing it before long!

Brother Andra Jernigan and wife Viola, Mashulaville, Mississippi, are celebrating an April arrival in their home in the person of a bouncing girl. Congratulations to you both! We hope she doesn't keep you up too much at night during cotton-chopping season.

Another Union member! A young son has just been born into the family of Brother Walter Clark, Howell, Arkansas. He will make up, we should think, for the member of Local 91 who we hear has moved away.

Still another STFU booster-- born this time into Oak Grove Local, Widener, Arkansas, but our reporter from that community omits the names of the parents. Congratulations anyway.

WAR ON THE HOME FRONT

Two marriages were recently celebrated among the Brothers at Mashulaville, Miss: that of Brother Jim Payton, to Miss Mary Ann May; and of Brother Sam Payton to Miss Kirgie Read. Congratulations! We extend to each of you heartiest wishes for a long and happy married life.

Wedding bells rang the first of May in Gobler, Mo., for Brother Willie West and Miss Cora Williams; for Lee Madison and Mrs. Susie Davis; and for Brother Everett Woodard and Mrs. Ruby Mae Thompson. Best wishes of the Union to all of you!

DEPARTED

We are indeed grieved at the death early in April of Brother Joe Flowers, Morning Star local, Cotton Plant, Ark. Brother Flowers was president of Morning Star local, and was esteemed as a loyal and untiring worker for the cause of the Union. His departure from this life is a loss only less great to his home local and the Union than to his immediate family. To his family and friends we extend heartfelt sympathy in this dark trial.

From Mashulaville, Miss., comes the report that the infant son born to Brother Gilbert lived only a short while. Our sympathies go out to you in your sorrow, Brother Gilbert.

From Stringtown, Miss., we hear of the loss to Brother Mitchell Hayden and wife of their infant son, and that Mrs. Hayden has been under care of a doctor for three weeks. We extend sympathy to you in your bereavement, and pray that Mrs. Hayden will soon recover.

Brother Roy Parks, Portageville, Mo., member National Executive Council of the STFU, writes us that he has just moved out on the Netherlands Road near Hayti, and that his family is in bed with measles.

Brother Henry Fox, lately of Portageville, has moved to another part of New Madrid County where there is no STFU local; and Brother Grandal Wolfe, also of Portageville, has moved out on Highway 61.

Brother Henry Johnson is very sick at present. He is living with Rev. Leo Maxwell at Earle, Ark. Brothers Dan, Beatrice, and Louis are living in Memphis.

WARNS AGAINST FARM BUREAU

In a statement to STFU NEWS J. F. Hynds, chairman of the STFU Grievance Committee, warns members of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union against tactics being used to gain members for the Farm Bureau from among tenants and sharecroppers.

Mr. Hynds calls attention to propaganda being put out, particularly in delta regions of Arkansas, claiming that all who expect to share in government farm benefit payments must join the Farm Bureau. This report Mr. Hynds brands as a malicious falsehood, directed against the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, which is the only organization standing between exploited tenants and sharecroppers and the planters who run the Farm Bureau.

Any farmer who is entitled to a government check can draw it, Mr. Hynds points out, whether or not he is a member of the Farm Bureau. Also, it is ridiculous to expect, if you are a tenant or sharecropper, benefits of any other kind to come from joining a landlord's organization, which the Farm Bureau is entirely. Members of it who are not landowners can look forward to no voice whatever in what the Bureau does--and Negroes who are led blindly into joining up suffer more than others from discriminations, particularly when the Farm Bureau holds its big banquets in Hotel Peabody, Memphis, Hotel Marion, Little Rock: both places from which Negroes, because of their color, are barred completely.

Mr. Hynds urges that STFU members rise up and denounce this latest move in behalf of the Farm Bureau, which will be in effect to denounce conditions which favor starvation and wage slavery and take a step toward establishment of justice and freedom.

JURY AWARDS DAMAGES

(FROM LAST-MINUTE NEWS). Damages of \$9,000 were awarded Mr. and Mrs. Jake Preston and five other Negro migratory workers, victims of a midnight attack in Cranbury, N. J., last August, by a jury in Federal District Court, Newark, on Friday, May 10th. The jury took seven minutes to arrive at a decision.

The suit, brought by the Workers Defense League on behalf of the victims, was not contested by the defendants, who were not in court and had previously pleaded no defense to the crime in criminal proceedings. Their attorney asked for mitigation of damages because of the youth of his clients.

In reply, David Robinson, lawyer for the WDL, pointed out that vindictiveness had not motivated the suit, that if it had there were sufficient grounds for sending the culprits to prison for long terms.

The attack occurred on the night of August 11th, but action was not taken by authorities until the New Jersey WDL stepped into the case at the request of local citizens. This led to the formation of the Cranbury branch of the WDL.

The Prestons, who were forced by the mob to strip naked, and were then beaten with rubber hoses and painted with white enamel, appeared as witnesses. Two of the five single men, C. D. Streater and Monroe Holmes, who escaped after being stripped and shot at by the mob, also testified.

The case served to bring to the attention of the public the problem of Negro migratory workers in New Jersey who are brought up from the South in trucks by contractors, housed in unsanitary, fire-hazardous barns and chicken coops, deprived of political and civil rights and worked for small wages.

SPECIAL

The National Office was closed the afternoon of May 15th due to the funeral of W. M. Treadway, father of our Secretary, Blaine E. Treadway. Mr. Treadway died May 13th after a protracted illness. He was a veteran of the Spanish-American war and a member of the Iron Moulders Union.

DELEGATES ARE THE CONTACTS BETWEEN MAN'S MISERY AND HIS EMANCIPATION.